

At the same time, we will adopt strict new requirements to screen checked baggage, to tighten security in all other areas of airports, and to provide greater security for travelers by bus and by train. This bill sets a one-year deadline for the transition to the new system. It gives my administration the flexibility we need to make that transition work.

Ultimately, this bill offers local authorities the option to bring in outside experts—a method that's worked well in Israel and Western Europe—provided those outside experts can meet our rigorous new safety standards and requirements.

Security comes first. The Federal Government will set high standards, and we will enforce them. These have been difficult days for Americans who fly and for American aviation. A proud industry has been hit hard. But this Nation has seen the dedication and spirit of our pilots and flightcrews and the hundreds of thousands of hard-working people who keep America flying. We know they will endure. I'm confident this industry will grow and prosper.

The holidays will soon be here. Even after the last few months, we have much to be thankful for. We have a great country. We're a great people. We have our faith, our families, and our friends. And, thanks to this bill, we have a new commitment to security in the air. And that's good news, as Americans travel to celebrate this season with their loved ones.

It is now my honor to sign this important piece of legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the lobby of Terminal A at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. S. 1447, approved November 19, was assigned Public Law No. 107-71.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony

November 19, 2001

Thank you all. Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. I'm not going to speak too long, because our guest of honor looks a little nervous. Nobody's told him yet that I'm going to give him a pardon.

We're especially glad that so many of the young can come today. Thank you all for being here. In a few moments, you can come up and pet the turkey if you want to.

Nick Weaver and Stuart Proctor of the National Turkey Foundation are here, and I want to thank you both for being here—honored you're here. Actually, you probably don't know this, but there were two turkeys brought to Washington for this occasion. By custom, an alternate is always on hand to fill in if needed.

This one right here—his name is Liberty. And the other turkey, the alternate, his name is Freedom. Now, Freedom is not here because he's in a secure and undisclosed location. *[Laughter]*

This White House tradition dates back to Abraham Lincoln. Probably what you don't know is that Abraham Lincoln had a son named Tad who kept a turkey as a pet. I thought about trying to keep the turkey as a pet, but I don't think the two dogs and the cat would like it.

From our very beginnings, gratitude has been a part of our national character. Through the generations, our country has known its share of hardships. And we've been through some tough times, some testing moments during the last months. Yet, we've never lost sight of the blessings around us: the freedoms we enjoy, the people we love, and the many gifts of our prosperous land.

On this holiday, we give thanks for our many blessings and for life itself. Thanksgiving reminds us that the greatest gifts don't come from the hands of man, but from the Maker of heaven and Earth.

This week American families will gather in that spirit. We will remember, too, those who approach the holidays with a burden of sadness. We think especially of families that recently lost loved ones and of our men and women in the Armed Forces serving far away from home.

This is a Nation of many faiths. And this holiday season we'll all be joined in prayer that those who mourn will find comfort, that those in dangers will find protection, and that God will continue to watch over the land we love.

I now have the duty of ending the suspense of our feathery guest. For this turkey and

his traveling companion, this will not be their last Thanksgiving. They will live out their days in comfort and care of Kidwell Farm of Herndon, Virginia. By virtue of an unconditional Presidential pardon, they are safe from harm.

May God continue to bless America, and I hope everybody has a happy Thanksgiving. Thank you for coming. We'll go over and see the turkey.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nick Weaver, chairman, and Stuart Proctor, Jr., president, National Turkey Federation.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

November 19, 2001

Operation Enduring Freedom

The President. We just had a very productive Cabinet meeting. We discussed a variety of subjects, spent a fair amount of time on the war and the progress we're making in Afghanistan. We have made great progress there, but there's still a lot of work to do. And the degree of difficulty is increasing as we work hard to achieve our objectives, not the least of which is to bring the Al Qaida to justice.

They're running, and they're trying to hide, and we're in pursuit. And we will stay the course until we bring them to justice. The American people must know it may take longer than some anticipate. They also need to know that we're a very patient group.

Secondly, we've been briefed by Andrew Natsios of the USAID about the humanitarian aid mission. And that, too, is a tough mission. There are millions of Afghans who were starving prior to September the 11th as a result of drought. Obviously, to complicate matters, there has been a war in that land. And yet, this good Nation is doing everything we can to move enormous amounts of food into the areas where people are likely to starve. I'm talking about thousands of tons, metric tons, of food. There are over 2,000 trucks now in place that are able to move more freely now that the Northern Alliance

and our military have liberated the northern part of Afghanistan, where the starvation is most likely to occur.

And so we've had a great discussion. And I'm proud of the way our Cabinet has been performing during these very difficult periods.

I'd be glad to answer a few questions. John [John Roberts, CBS News], have you got one?

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, your Secretary of State a little while ago said that he would use U.S. influence to try to bring the two sides together and forge a Middle East peace. Wouldn't it be swifter, sir, if you used the power of your office to do it personally, by meeting with these individuals? And at what point would you do that?

The President. Well, John, first of all, this administration has been working the Middle East ever since we came into office. I've been on the phone with the Prime Minister of Israel, our longtime friend, a lot, as has the Secretary of State. We've been dealing with the Europeans—all kinds of people are interested in the Middle East—reminding them that it takes willing parties. It takes—people must say that they want to work for peace.

And so our objective is to convince both parties to make a conscious decision to come to the peace table. And when they do so, we're more than willing to help. But first things first—is to convince the parties that peace is necessary.

It also is important for us to remind Mr. Arafat that in order for the peace discussions to begin, that the level of violence must substantially be reduced. And so we're working hard with not only the Palestinians but as well as with others who have an interest in the area to work to reduce violence, so that peace discussions can begin in relative security.

Our mind is, of course, on the war in Afghanistan, but it hasn't diverted our attention away from the need to work hard to bring peace to the Middle East. And we would hope to be able to do so.